

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 PER-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1435

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2070

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM

SUBJECT: ATTACKS ON BENINESE COMMUNITY

REF: STATE 189801

1. I AM OF COURSE PREPARED CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS REFTTEL, BUT PRIOR TO DOING SO, WISH BE SURE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF SECOND SENTENCE PARA 4. I REALIZE INSTRUCTION THIS SENTENCE IS DISCRETIONARY, BUT BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE TO FUTURE BILATERAL RELATIONS, I ASSUME DEPARTMENT WOULD PREFER THAT I MAKE IT.

2. SENTENCE IN ITS ENTIRETY WILL INEVITABLY BE INTERPRETED BY BONGO (I BELIEVE IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT INSTRUCTION WITH HIM DIRECTLY TO ENSURE A) THAT IT REACHES HIM, AND B) THAT IT REACHES HIM WITHOUT UNDERGOING SOME KIND OF MODIFICATION) AS SAYING IN EFFECT THAT UNLESS HE DOES SOMETHING TO HALT "SUDDEN AND MASS EXPULSION" OF BENINESE, HE RISKS DAMAGE TO GABONESE RELATIONS WITH US, OR, PUT ANOTHER WAY, THE USG IS INVOLVING ITSELF IN A MATTER WHICH HE NO DOUBT VIEWS AS BEING STRICTLY BETWEEN GABON AND BENIN. WE CANNOT EXPECT HIM TO BE PLEASED, WITH RESULT THAT QUITE APART FROM POSSIBLE IMPACT OF HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS ON BILATERAL AFFAIRS AS SUGGESTED BY DEPARTMENT, WE WILL HAVE ALREADY RISKED DAMAGE BY PUTTING OUR CONCERN TO HIM IN THOSE

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TERMS.

3. I BELIEVE BONGO WILL UNDERSTAND OUR CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS EVEN THOUGH HE MAY NOT LIKE TO HEAR IT APPLIES TO HIS PROBLEMS WITH BENINESE. I QUESTION, HOWEVER, WHETHER IT WILL SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE TO SUGGEST POINT ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR BILATERAL RELATIONS IF MASS

EXPULSION OCCURS. REFERENCE TO NEGATIVE IMPACT SHOULD BE ENOUGH. MAJOR DAMAGE TO HUMAN RIGHTS HAPPENED WHEN STORES AND HOMES WERE LOOTED AND SOME BENINESE ATTACKED. DEGREE TO WHICH THIS WAS RESULT OF LATENT GABONESE XENOPHOBIA OR WAS STIMULATED BY GOG, OR BOTH, IS NOT YET CLEAR, AND PROBABLY NEVER WILL BE. IT NOW DOUBTFUL, HOWEVER, WHETHER EVEN IF BONGO CALLED OF REPATRIATION, MANY BENINESE WOULD BE WILLING TO RETURN TO BUSINESS AS USUAL. WE HAVE ALREADY HEARD SOME STORIES OF EFFORTS TO GET CERTAIN BENINESE TO RETURN AND OF THEIR REFUSING DO SO.

4. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WHILE NOT WISHING DOWNPLAY SERIOUSNESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS THAT HAVE ALREADY OCCURED, I SUGGEST THAT WE CAN MAKE OUR POINT ALONG LINES OF PRESS GUIDANCE PARA 2 REFTEL WITHOUT IMPLYING THAT RELATIONS MAY BE JEOPARDIZED. OBVIOUSLY, IF RELATIONS ARE TO SUFFER, BONGO SHOULD BE TOLD SO. I DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT BONGO, WHO IS ON PUBLIC RECORD RE REPATRIATION, COULDN EVEN IF HE WISHED, REVERSE HIMSELF NOW, ALTHOUGH, PER LIBREVILLE 2066, IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT IN FINAL ANALYSIS ACTUAL NUMBER REPATRIATED MAY BE CONSIDERABLY SMALLER THAN FIGURES NOW BEING QUOTED. IN MEANTIME, HE IS CLEARLY TRYING CREAT IMPRESSION, NOW THAT INITIAL DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE, OF BEING SCRUPULOUSLY CAREFUL TO SEE THAT NO FURTHER INCIDENTS OCCUR AND THAT BENINESE ARE BEING LOOKED AFTER.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: I WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS SOONEST SO THAT I CAN GO AHEAD AND SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH BONGO.
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RE FSLs, INITIAL REPORTS PER LIBREVILLE 2022 TURNED OUT TO BE SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED. QUESTIONED CAREFULLY AFTER EMOTION OF MOMENT QUIETED DOWN, IT NOW APPEARS THAT WHILE TWO EMBASSY (TOGOLESE AND CAE) FSLs WERE THREATENED, AS WERE TWO USICA FSLs (BOTH TOGOLESE), NONE WAS PHYSICALLY ATTACKED OR HARMED. THREE, HOWEVER, LOST PERSONAL PROPERTY, AS DID ONE USICA BENINESE FSL. WE SHALL NONETHELESS EXPRESS OUR STRONG CONCERN PER PARA3 REFTEL. TIENKEN

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